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## **CONCEPTION OF A SIGN IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HURUFISM BY NASIMI AND NAIMI IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKIC-AZERBAIJANI TRADITION**

**Abstract.** Imadeddin Nasimi is a great Azerbaijani poet and martyr of Sufism, executed by religious fanatics for his extraordinary thoughts and statements that contradicted the official ideology. Nasimi and his associate, Fazlullah Naimi, are the leading representatives of Hurufism, the medieval Sufi philosophy and the theory of sign systems, that is, if one may so express it, medieval «structuralism» or semiotics.

The conception of the sign of Naimi and Nasimi is fundamentally different from the European in such a high degree of integrity and internal unity of the sign, which has never been in Western semiotics.

**Keywords:** semiotics, sign, hurufism, tradition, Sufism.

**Introduction.** The genesis of the original version of semiotics occurred in medieval Azerbaijani philosophy. The integrity of the sign that had never seen and known before by Western philosophy!

The methodology and degree of research on the problem. Hurufism is considered here for the first time in the optics of semiotics.

The methodology of work is based on the general philosophical methodology and methodology of semiology (semiotics) and poststructuralism [8].

1. “Cognize the mystery of the title - the named is always its identity” [3] - wrote F. Naimi. This means that the sign and its referent are indistinguishable.

The basic concepts of modern Western semiotics for the analysis of the sign were substantiated by the classic of this science in the West, F. de Saussure. By the definition of this scientist, the signifier - the signified are two sides of the sign, “like the front and back sides of a paper sheet” [2, p. 94].

“The signifier is that the sign is accessible to perception (vision, hearing, for example, a sound combination ...” [2, p. 94] or a set of graphemes, “The signified is the semantic content in the sign transmitted by the signifier or the intermediary” [2, p. 94]. According to Benveniste’s definition, “the signifier is the sound translation of the idea, the signified is the mental equivalent of the signifier” [2, p. 94]. A sign is the relationship between the signifier and the signified of which it consists, as well as the referent - the real object that is subject to the signification. So, in the ism of Hurufites, unlike the concepts of Saussure, the signifier and the sign differ only conditionally, and the main idea of the semiotics of Hurufism, in my opinion, is the indistinguishability between the signifier, the signified and the sign, and its referent, thus the sign acquires magical and mystical power and becomes an effective tool for the neurolinguistic programming of adherents of Hurufism and the subtle energy transformation of their consciousness.

However, sometimes, according to Z. Kuli-zadeh, Naimi and Nasimi point not to complete identity, but to the dialectical unity of letters and words and their sense, sign and referent [3, p. 107].

However, this connection is much closer than in the Western European semiotic concept of the sign. So, Naimi writes: “... if separate the word or letter from the essence of the subject, the subject will lose its being” [3, p. 107].

And in another place, the philosopher directly points at the complete identity of the signifier, signified, and the sign itself, as well as its referent;

“The title is identical to that is named, O son,

Take a look at Aleph, ba, ta and sa.

Since Aleph is always the name of the letter “a,”

How can one separate the named from its name”. [3, p.120].

2. A philosophical analysis of the ideas of the Hurufites and Nasimi shows: the main idea is «I am the truth!» Some of the contradictions of this idea are obvious: the journey in God («baka»), in which it is realized as a flash of the altered state of consciousness of ecstasy, cannot be completed, because Allah, is the Absolute, is unlimited and infinite, and the Absolute Truth is inexhaustible. However, Nasimi and Naimi seem to have been guided by the principle of «aan-daim» - the truth of the moment (Ibn al-Arabi) and the Tengrian-Turkic faith which is Magical-Shamanian one by its essence, believing that by saying «Truth!» they experience a moment of unity with the Almighty at that jiffy. This corresponded to their «elm al-huruf» – medieval

semiotics if the «signifier» is identical to the «signified» (and they considered just like that). According to this logic, when pronouncing the word “truth”, the fullness of its meaning penetrates the speaker.

When there is no ego, it is destroyed by maqams of the tariqa or when self-identity or self is completely lost (which is pointed by J. Rumi in translations of Leonid Tiraspolsky the Sheikh of the Order of Aga Neymatulla in South Azerbaijan), then only the truth of great Sheikh Nizami from «Khosrov and Shirin» remains: “There is only You (Allah), all the rest is non-existence.” So “An-al-Haqq!” Or “I am the truth!” Nasimi means the same because the annihilated is not identical to itself. “I” is “not – I”, but Allah!

And in general: what difference does it make if there is an «I» or not if there is Allah the Almighty!

And it all started with Hallaj and his “I am the truth!”

3. As the researches of Z. Kuli-zadeh has shown, there are all grounds to believe that activity not only of Nasimi, but also his spiritual «father» – Mansur-Al Hallaj – proceeded in Azerbaijan, and had a character of the wide popular movement. Under the slogans of «batiniyya» – the secret teaching of Islam [3].

4. It was in Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages that the theory of sign systems – structuralism and poststructuralism - began to take shape. Only in reverse order, i.e. not as in Western Europe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (first structuralism, then, as a reaction to it, poststructuralism and postmodernism). In Azerbaijan (South), first appeared Jabbar's «poststructuralism», who by his experiments with “simulacra” (the term of Baudrillard the poststructuralist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) – meaningless signifiers without signified – introduced adherents into state of shock during zikrs, into altered states of consciousness like “samadhi” or the Sufi «fan» (in Arabic «destruction»). According to Osho, the Eng. word «gabble» – incoherent speech – comes from the name of Jabbar [6]. Then Hallaj appeared with his consciousness, completely changed, for whom contradictions and the law of the excluded third did not exist. Then qalandars and Shams Tabrizi have appeared, whose heritage is to this day spinning «Mevlevi» which have become for centuries an emblem—the symbol of Turkey, and many volumes of the masterpieces of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi. The “Divan of Shams Tabrizi” abounds in paradoxes, nonsense, and other manifestations of the illogical, which in poststructuralism – postmodernism have been rediscovered by Derrida with his deconstruction, the meaning of

which, according to Easthope, comes down to non-dualism or anti-binarism [2], i.e. non-binary non-Aristotelian logic of texts construction. And finally, the great Naimi and Nasimi ... Hurufism or «elm-al-huruf» – «the science of letters»... What is this if not the theory of signs and sign systems – semiotics, which appeared in the West only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century! Hurufites have believed that letters - signs of the Arabic and Persian alphabets - objectively exist in a kind of «platonic» «world of ideas» created by Allah-the Truth, who himself is a «sign», a «sign of signs» as in the Bible, «God is the Word ... And the word was with God! ... And the word was: God!» In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, similar ideas were put forward by the Protestant philosopher Tillich, who directly formulated this idea “God is a sign” [1].

Living sign! Perhaps the mystery of this paradox lies in the hypothetical Arabic calligraphy of his living Face!?! This is how one should understand the ideas of the Hurufites.

A face of a person by Nasimi and the Hurufites is a reflection of the Face of Allah and the angels. And it also consisted of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.

5. Therefore, in the Azerbaijani miniature of the classical period (16<sup>th</sup> century), especially in the miniatures of Sultan Muhammad and his school; faces of people as indicated by prof. N. Mehdi, have the outlines of the letters of the Arabic or Persian alphabets [5] – this is a direct continuation and development of the ideas of “elm al-huruf” – the Hurufism of the great Nasimi and his friend and mentor Fazlullah Naimi.

So, for example, almost always the rounded hemispherical lower part of the human face in miniatures resembles the outline of the Arabic letter “b”. Because in “Javidan-i-Kabir” by Naimi the formula “Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim” is reduced to the essence of one first letter “b” [3].

6. The holistic non-dualistic concept of a sign indistinguishable from the referent, developed by Naimi and Nasimi, should have had some philosophical and methodological basis. Of course, this is the esoteric philosophy of non-dualism, known in Hinduism as Advaita Vedanta, in Buddhism as the metaphysics of Tantrayana and the practice of Ch'an and Zen in Far Eastern mysticism. I do not think it can be about strong Hindu-Buddhist influence on Sufism, as J. Subhan and Mir Valiuddin [4] write about it. Non-dualism is inherent in all ecstatic mysticism and esoteric traditions in general, unlike «external» exoteric dogmatic religions, which are dualistic. After all, the

practitioner eventually faces the question: how to “remove”, at least logically and philosophically, the subject-object separation? Hence «I am the Truth!» by Nasimi follows.

Z. Kuli-zadeh writes in this connection: “In his famous masnavi Nasimi, in the spirit of Sufi pantheism, describing the act of creation, he develops the idea of the unity of the opposite origins and their mutual transition: bitter water becomes the wine of paradise, poison has turned into sugar and sweets, ... faith and disbelief have become the same (a single phenomenon – Z.K), the soul and body have merged, everything has been freed from duality (bold is mine – T.B) in this (unity – Z.K) oneness.”

However, let's quote Nasimi himself:

“Unbelief and faith, meeting and separation - everything have become equal, come ...” [3, p. 190].

Or:

“The altar and the worshiper have become one,  
And the worshiper has become a true altar.”

Here we see the doctrine of non-dualism and the deliberate violation of the laws of Aristotle's logic.

This doctrine of non-dualism was clearly formulated by Nasimi for the first time in the history of Muslim philosophy. Before this, there were only monistic, not non-dualistic doctrines. It was only in the 20th century the Western scientists Jung, Fromm, Korzybski, Lacan, and Derrida, as well as logicians – “intuitionists” (first of all, von Neumann and our compatriot Bakhtiyar Lotfi-Zadeh with his “fuzzy logic” and the theory of “fuzzy sets”) drew attention to non-dualism (and even only in Hinduism and Zen).

7. But there is a fundamental difference between the “postmodern” poststructuralism of Lacan and Derrida or the “Chicago School of General Semantics” (A. Korzybski) and the semiotics of the Hurufites. Poststructuralism of the West leads to the destruction of the sign [2] (however, like the non-confessional mystic of the early Middle Ages Jabbar). Nasimi and Naimi, on the contrary, align the sign to maximum integrity, divine, ideal integrity. At the same time, they do not even want to distinguish between “signified” and “signifier”, “concept” and “denotatum”, “sign” and its “referent”, as F. de Saussure and, later, Western structuralists of the 20th century do.

8. The understanding of Hurufites of the Absolute as being – its source – the world – human as a single stream of existence, as indicated by Z. Kuli-

zadeh [3], up to the indistinguishability and identity of parts of this Whole, is connected not only with the continuation of the tradition of Wujudism of al-Arabi and Rumi but also really not quite consistent with official Islam.

All this refers to the “holistic perception of Being” which was characteristic for the worldview of the representatives of the Primordial Tradition [7] according to prof. E.A. Salamzadeh and A.Dugin.

9. According to the opinion of the doctor of philosophy, G. Alijanzadeh expressed in a private conversation with the author of the article, Nasimi's verses “I am the Truth! The Truth is in me!” are incorrectly translated and interpreted. In his opinion, Nasimi did not take a non-Islamic position of self-deification.

And these verses must be translated like this:

“I am the truth! [but not the truth of the Absolute – T.B.]

The truth is in me! [Truth may be present in a person, but not belong to him as an isolated subject].

**Conclusion.** Experiments with the signings of Jabbar, F. Naimi, and I. Nasimi indicate that we have the right to consider medieval Azerbaijan to be the birthplace of semiotics (structuralism) and even poststructuralism. “Elm al-huruf (the science of the sign letters) – Hurufism – is nothing but the theory of sign systems – semiotics.

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### ***Tahir Bayramov (Azərbaycan)***

#### **Nəsimi və Nəimi hürufilik fəlsəfəsində işarə konsepsiyası**

#### **Türk-Azərbaycan ənənəsi kontekstində**

Böyük Azərbaycan şairi və sufizmin şəhidi İmaməddin Nəsimi, din fanatiklərinin tərəfindən öz qeyri-adi və rəsmi ideologiyaya qarşı gedən fikir və sözlərinə görə edam edilmişdir. Nəsimi və onun tərəfdarı Fəzlullah Nəimi – orta əsrlər Şərqi hürufizmin aparıcı nümayəndələridirlər. Hürufizm orta əsrlər sufi fəlsəfəsi və işarə sistemlərinin, ayrı sözlə desək, orta əsrlər semiotikasının nəzəriyyəsidir.

Nəimi və Nəsiminin işarə konsepsiyası Avropa işarə konsepsiyasından əsaslı surətdə fərqlənir, belə ki, qərb semiotikasında heç zaman belə yüksək səviyyədə işarələrin bütövlüyü və daxili vəhdəti olmayıb.

**Açar sözlər:** semiotika, işarə, hürufilik, ənənə, sufizm.

### ***Taip Bayramov (Azerbaydžan)***

#### **Концепция знака в философии хуруфизма Насими**

#### **и Наими в контексте тюркско-азербайджанской традиции**

Имадеддин Насими – великий азербайджанский поэт и мученик суфизма, казненный религиозными фанатиками за свой неординарные и идущие в разрез с официальной идеологией мысли и высказывания. Насими и его сподвижник Фазлуллах Наими – ведущие представители хуруфизма – средневековой суфийской философии и теории знаковых систем, т.е., если так можно выразиться средневекового «структурализма» или семиотики.

Концепция знака Наими и Насими принципиально отличается от европейской такой высокой степенью целостности и внутреннего единства знака, которой никогда не было в западной семиотике.

**Ключевые слова:** семиотика, знак, хуруфизм, традиция, суфизм.